

DOWN TO EARTH

Admission Rush in Dhaka University

By A S M Nurunnabi

With every passing year, the already acute problem of admission to the Dhaka University is getting worse. It was reported that in the academic year 1993-94, the total number of seats available in the first year Honours course was 3737 against which 52,098 application forms were bought by intending candidates. True, many of such application forms may not have been submitted at all, but it is easy to guess from the huge number of application forms bought by intending candidates that the degree of competition for admission to the available seats would be extremely tough and that a very large number of candidates would be refused admission and they would have to look elsewhere for their chances. This stifling situation has become a natural yearly phenomenon. If we place this picture side by side with another dismal picture of prospective educated unemployed, the total scenario takes on harrowing aspects.

Some suggest easy solution to the problem such as expanding the capacity of different faculty departments. Such a course may not be easy to adopt for several reasons, the more difficult among which is that it involves the question of expansion of the whole infrastructure of connected facilities including also the question of considerable outlay.

The question of expansion of existing facilities involves another crucial aspect. The point is how far it is feasible to put any additional burden or pressure on the existing facilities, which are already under

severe strain. In this perspective, some are of the view that since the university is already steeped in manifold problems of serious nature, its prime objective at present should be to put maximum possible emphasis on maintaining proper standard of education with the assurance of completing different courses in due time. However popular and pressing the demand for expansion of different departments of the university may be, there is no denying that the existing standard of education at the university is far from satisfactory and it will go down further if any expansion is projected without adequate supporting facilities.

There are also others who advocate the introduction of a second shift of classes in the university. This suggestion loses much of its validity because of the multitude of problems already facing the university, as pointed out. Add to this the issue of finding additional residential accommodation. Even if we feel limited need for recruitment of additional teachers for the second shift, the offer of extra emoluments may tempt some existing teachers to undertake extra duties but there is scope for apprehension that the standard of education may suffer drastically when teachers are called upon to put in extra long hours of labour.

There are many reasons why the Dhaka University attracts increasing number of students: it is the capital, a megalopolis with a cosmopolitan image. The problem is how we can reduce the current ail-

ment with the students for the Dhaka University.

There are of course some other universities in the country but they seem to attract the students less. When a student goes to any such university, it is perhaps under compulsive circumstances. In this background, the need of the hour seems to be to evaluate the factors which act as deterrents for many students to go to such universities.

If corrective steps could be taken to attract students by ensuring proper standard at least in the universities at the regional level, the pressure of new admission on the Dhaka University may considerably ease. The students of the concerned regions will then have opportunities for higher studies in their nearby universities.

Lately some private universities, colleges have been established in the country. Three such universities are already operating in Dhaka. But this has limited capacity. Moreover the high cost of education at such institution makes little difference to the problem of congestion at the Dhaka University. Of course, there are many people in the country keen on investing big money for giving their children the best possible facilities for education available in the country. But in the view of knowledgeable observers, education is one area that should not be subjected to overcommercialisation. This may be a factor which contributes in a large measure to the creation of unequal standard of education at the same level.



Under the eye of Israeli border police, a Palestinian Muslim family walks to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem old city to pray on the first day of Ramadan Friday. — AFP photo

US-Japanese trade talks stalled before summit

WASHINGTON, Feb 11: US and Japanese trade negotiations stalled Friday morning before President Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa were to meet on economic issues, reports AP.

US and Japanese officials said that US Trade Representative Mickey Kantor and Foreign Minister Tsumotomi Hata met from 1:00 am to 4:00

WASHINGTON, Feb 11: President Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa opened talks today and Clinton declared the US-Japanese relationship "very strong" in spite of the apparent failure to reach agreement on trade, reports Reuters.

am trying to bridge their differences but adjourned without success.

"The talks have broken down," said administration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Jiro Okayama, a spokesman for the Japanese delegation, disputed the US characterization that the talks had broken down but he said that at the present time no further sessions between Kantor and Hata were scheduled.

Yeltsin, Clinton talk Bosnian issue

MOSCOW, Feb 11: President Boris Yeltsin spoke with President Clinton for more than 30 minutes Friday about the worsening situation in Bosnia, a Yeltsin spokesman said, reports AP.

The conversation came after several failed attempts earlier this week and came amid rising Russian displeasure over the US and NATO policies toward the former Yugoslavia.

Russia strongly opposes air strikes on Serb positions near Sarajevo and has criticized NATO for issuing an ultimatum to the Serbs. Russia has long supported the Serbs, who are fellow Slavs.

Yeltsin spokesman Anatoly Krasikov told The Associated Press that Clinton called Yeltsin at 5:15 pm (9:15 am EST). He did not immediately release any details of their conversation.

Earlier this week, Clinton had expressed frustration over his failure to reach the Russian president by telephone to discuss Bosnia.

On Thursday, White House officials blamed "technical difficulties" and scheduling problems for the failure to complete the call. Clinton indicated the problem was in Moscow. Asked why he could not get through to Yeltsin, he said, "I don't know."

AG meets PM today

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Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah were present at the meeting at Sugandha.

Meeting sources said that most of these ministers were in favour of accepting the resignation should Haq submit the letter.

The ministers were learnt to have also suggested to the Prime Minister not to replace Haq with Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Khandaker, who has already become controversial.

"A non-controversial man may be chosen for the post of AG," the source said.

The dispensability of Aminul Haq, as well as the timing of his decision to quit, were also considered in detail by the ministers at Sugandha.

Aminul Haq, who was appointed by the caretaker government in early 1991, successfully prosecuted deposed president H M Ershad in three corruption cases. He was also expected to appear for the State in several other under trial and pending cases against the former president.

The ministers at last night's caucus with the PM, as well as other BNP stalwarts accused Law Minister Mirza Golam

Govt has failed to run country, says Hasina

Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the nation is moving toward a state of ruination because of weak and inefficient administration of the BNP, reports UNB.

"The government has miserably failed to run the country. Corruption, nepotism, unemployment and terrorism have become the salient features of the BNP rule," she said.

The Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament was addressing a group of leaders and workers of Khulna district unit of the Jatiya Party at 29 Minto Road in the morning.

More than 500 JP leaders and workers led by former mayor of the Khulna City Corporation Kazi Aminul Haq Amin met Hasina and formally joined the Awami League.

Welcoming the new comers, Hasina said their decision in joining the Awami League is very timely in the context of national politics. People are now looking at the Awami League in this critical juncture of the nation, she said.

The present crisis, however, could be overcome by strengthening the Awami League, a trusted organisation of the masses, she observed.

Party's central leaders Zillur Rahman, Salauddin Yusuf MP, Munnunjan Sufian, Abul Hasnat Abdullah MP were present.

Hearing of Ayodhya case adjourned

LUCKNOW, Feb 11: The Special Additional Chief Magistrate (CBI), Vijay Varma, today adjourned the hearing of the Ayodhya case relating to the demolition of the disputed structure on December 6, 1992, to February 21 next, reports PTI.

Earlier Special Prosecution Counsel Chaube handed over copies of five audio-cassettes to the counsel I B Singh who was appearing on behalf of accused — D B Rai and R N Srivastava.

8 hacked to death in India

NEW DELHI, Feb 11: Attackers hacked to death eight mourners while they were returning from a funeral near the southern Indian temple town of Madurai, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says AFP.

Some 20 attackers ambushed the victims late Thursday night while they were returning from the funeral in Kumuthi, a tiny town near Madurai in Tamil Nadu state, PTI said. Among the victims were five women and a teenage girl.

Book fair

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items like food, handicraft, souvenirs and gift items.

In the afternoon, Prof Abu H Imamuiddin presented a paper on "Conservation of Traditional and Archaeological sites" as part of the series of academic deliberations, arranged on the occasion.

"The Archaeological sites and structures of the country are given the least support," the key-note speaker said. "Consequently, we see an erosion of our tradition."

The paper was later discussed by Dr Nazimuddin Ahmed and Rabiul Hussain with Dr Md Shahjahan in the chair.

In the evening, a cultural show was staged in which Sheikh Lutful Rahman, Fakir Alamgir, Rathindranath Ray and Shammi Akhter rendered songs.

The fire originated at the Apurba Publishers' stall at the southern corner of the Bangla Academy pond at around 8 pm. Flames spread fast during the windy evening and within moments five other adjacent stalls went up in flames.

Fire engines rushed to the spot and brought things under control within 10 minutes. The firemen cut off power line, plunging the whole area into darkness.

The damaged stalls included Ridoy Prakashony, Granthoni, Sriushty, Uttarahdhar and Bandhu.

According to witnesses, the fire was caused by a cigarette butt but the Fire Service did not confirm it. The extent of damage could not be immediately estimated.

Meanwhile, a Bangla Academy handout claimed that books worth Tk 5.33 lakh were sold at the fair over the past eleven days.

The recently published English Bengali Dictionary topped the list as almost all the 5000 copies of the first print have been sold out in the mel.

The Midnight File

Snowstorm forces UN to postpone debate on Bosnia

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 11: A fierce snowstorm that hit New York today forced the UN Security Council to postpone debate on the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina until Monday. The UN Security Council had called for the session today to allow countries to clarify their positions on the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina but 22 centimetres (nine inches) of snow here made travel treacherous. The Security Council meeting was called for on Tuesday by the Non-Aligned and Muslim countries, reports AFP.

120 nominations received for Nobel Peace Prize

OSLO, Feb 11: Norway's Nobel Institute today said it had received 120 nominations for the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize, roughly in line with previous years. "Sixty-nine individuals and 30 organisations have been nominated in addition to 21 joint nominations," a institute spokeswoman said she declined to give any further details. The list includes names like Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, who have been nominated for their Middle East peace accord, reports Reuters.

Discovery lands in Florida

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla, Feb 11: Space shuttle Discovery and its US-Russian crew returned to Earth today after being forced to stay up an extra orbit because of bad weather at the Florida landing site. The shuttle touched down at Kennedy Space Centre at 2:19 pm, EST (19:19 GMT), ending a history-making mission that began just a few miles away eight days ago, reports AP.

Iraq frees 8 Pak prisoners

BAGHDAD, Feb 11: President Saddam Hussein has freed eight Pakistani prisoners after an appeal by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's husband Asif Ali Zardari, Pakistani diplomats said Thursday, reports AFP.

The prisoners, who were jailed for illegal entry, were freed on Thursday and were to fly back to Pakistan on Friday with Zardari, the diplomats added.

Two of them were military personnel who strayed into Iraq while engaged in mine-sweeping operations along the Iraq-Kuwait border in March 1993. A third, a construction company employee in Kuwait, was arrested in August 1992.

The five others had been arrested after entering the country looking for work, the diplomats said.

Zardari arrived Wednesday on the first visit by a Pakistani official since the 1991 Gulf War, in which Pakistan sided with the US-led multi national coalition that ousted the Iraqi army from Kuwait. Some 10,000 Pakistani soldiers were sent to Saudi Arabia, but they did not fight.

Prisoner dies in Sylhet jail

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 11: An under-trial prisoner Babul Miah, 22, died in the Sylhet District Jail this morning. He hailed from a village of Barguna district. The cause of his death could not be ascertained as yet.

An UD (unnatural death) case has been registered with the Kotwali police. Post-mortem examination on the body was performed today in the Sylhet M A G Osmany Medical College Hospital.

Privatisation Board

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the Council Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. One bid is being reviewed. The asset and liability of the mill in question will need to be re-structured before negotiation of sale.

Thus, since "the list of 42 enterprises was announced in 1991, actual privatisation has not progressed too far. Sources in the Privatisation Board say that this slow progress has been caused by weak response to offers for sale. The pattern of response has made it clear to the government that most of the enterprises shall have to be restructured before private buyers would be interested in buying them."

The government has drawn up a plan to strengthen the Privatisation Board to enable it to spearhead the privatisation programme more effectively. The plan will raise the Board's technical ability to formulate privatisation programme, lay down criteria for privatisation and draw up time-bound action plan for privatisation of selected enterprises. Sources say that the World Bank is studying privatisation-related issues in Bangladesh and there is a possibility of using a revamped Privatisation Board as the vehicle for future privatisation-related assistance to Bangladesh.

"Closing down the university could not solve the crisis," the statement said demanding arrests of all terrorists. The closure of the university will cause sufferings to the students who are already one year behind the academic calendar, the SCF added.

Seminar on family

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"The 'haves' associated with the 'have-nots', in other words wealth and frustration mingled together to commit undesirable things," he observed.

He informed that in Dhaka city last year 66 incidents of cruelty to women, 282 abductions, 333 incidents of extortion or terrorism, 239 cases of narcotics traffic ring and 403 cases of car theft took place.

He also noted that a good many of their crimes took place against elderly people or they became victims of traffic accidents.

"We are today engaged in a universal war which threatens to erode our long-cherished values and which has no respect for national boundaries, no discrimination as to race, religion, age, gender, no limit to time," Huq said.

Dr Enajuddin Ahmed said that a handful of people have amassed so much wealth that the expectations of the rest of the society have soared.

He said those who expected to retire as associate professor have suddenly found themselves in the chair of full professors.

"The majors have become major generals over the last 40 years, those who could give Tk 10 lakh now can give Taka one crore," he said.

Dr Rangalal Sen observed that the present crisis in family lives originated from the crisis of capitalism.

ATM Giasuddin said that the city-dwellers have become isolated from one another and have become escapist.

"Nowadays we avoid involvement when we see someone in trouble, or being mugged... We never protest any injustice," he said.

The students no longer follow their teachers because the teachers lack the ideals, he concluded.

US, ROK for solution to DPRK's N-issue thru' talks

SEOUL, Feb 11: South Korea and the United States have agreed to continue efforts for a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, news reports today quoted Seoul's Foreign Minister Han Sung-Joo, as saying in Washington, reports Reuters.

"Our two countries decided to exert all available efforts to settle the nuclear question through dialogue until the board of governors' meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) opens (February 21)," Han said on Thursday, according to a report by South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

Han was in Washington to discuss ways to resolve the long-running impasse over North Korea's nuclear programme.

He spoke to South Korean journalists after talks with US Vice President Al Gore and National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, Yonhap's report said.

Han was scheduled to meet Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Defence Secretary William Perry and other senior US officials today to

Israel-PLO talks resume Monday

JERUSALEM, Feb 11: Talks between Israel and the PLO on Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho will resume in Egypt on Monday, an Israeli spokesman said today, reports Reuters.

Teams headed by PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres at meetings in Cairo bridged gaps on border crossings and security for Jewish settlers that have delayed Israel's pullout from the areas set for December 13.

Oden Ben-Ami, a spokesman for Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, said negotiators would meet in the Egyptian resort of Taba to finalise details of the withdrawal and transfer of civilian authority.

AFP adds: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Thursday said he accepts that the Palestinians have their own "entity," but not a state.

"I recognize the existence of a Palestinian entity, but there is a difference between that and a Palestinian state," he said.

"The Palestinians have the right to a flag, symbols and a police force, but not a state," he told a meeting of the ruling Labour Party in Tel Aviv.

Rabin was commenting on the signature Wednesday in Cairo of a security deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation paving the way for Palestinian self-rule in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank region of Jericho.

Rabin voiced hope the accord will allow Israel to "repress terrorism."

Aid under FWP

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Bangladesh is a serious problem," she said adding "but we are proud of the success of the programme in this country."

In Bangladesh, the programmes are managed jointly by the WFP, the government and the NGOs. The WFP was taken up in this country following the famine in 1974.

In reply to a question about the prospects of food autarky in Bangladesh she said Bangladesh is close to attaining self sufficiency in terms of food production, but the autarky depends on proper distribution of food.

The country needs food assistance for some more years, she said responding to another questioner who asked whether Bangladesh is in a position to suspend the programmes, as some other countries have done.

"The FFW programme ensures sustainable development in the country besides eradicating poverty," she added.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia expressed her deep shock at the death of Justice Syed Mesbahuddin Hossain.

In a condolence message, the Prime Minister recalled the contribution of Justice Hossain in discharging his duties with utmost sincerity and dedication.

Begum Zia expressed her heart-felt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina has expressed her profound grief at the sudden demise of Syed Mesbahuddin Hossain.

In a message of condolence yesterday, Hasina said, in his death the country lost a patriot. The nation will remember him for his wisdom and farsightedness he showed both as a Judge and Election Commissioner, she added.

Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rauf has expressed deep shock at the sudden death of his colleague, Justice Syed Mesbahuddin Hossain.

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